



# BRONZE METALIST

Traynor YCS50H 50-watt head  
and YCS412VA 4x12 cabinet

BY CHRIS GILL

**A**LTHOUGH TRAYNOR made some highly regarded tube amps during the Sixties and Seventies, most guitarists rarely ever saw them outside of Canada. I personally encountered a Traynor guitar amp only once when I auditioned for some stoner dude who was trying to form a band in Hollywood in the mid Eighties. I remember having to buy a burrito for the guy when we went to Los Burritos after we jammed because the damn hippie “forgot” his wallet. I was tempted to slip a mickey into the dude’s Orange Bang so I could drive off with his Traynor in my trunk, but my conscience got the better of me.

In 2000, Traynor resurrected its tube-amp business by introducing a new line of products that provide a wide variety of modern features at affordable prices. The Custom Special 50 Head amp (officially known as the YCS50H) is a recent addition that continues this trend by offering two fully independent channels with voice switching and selectable 50-watt Class AB/15-watt Class A output. It’s paired with the YCS412VA 4x12 speaker cabinet loaded with Celestion GT12T-75 speakers and wired to operate at eight ohms in stereo and four or 16 ohms in mono. Together, the Traynor YCS50H half stack sells for less than many tube heads go for these days.

## FEATURES

WITH ITS BRONZE-COLORED control panel, oversized pointer knobs and classic-style logo, the YCS50H head styling may suggest vintage values, but the abundance of knobs (18) and switches (eight) arranged in three rows announces that this amp is no throwback to the days of Watergate and *Chico and the Man*. Both channels feature controls for gain, volume, treble, mid, bass, and reverb and effect loop level, and they share controls for presence, resonance and master volume as well as a voice switch that bypasses the presence and resonance controls. Channel 1 also includes a boost level control with an on/off switch and Modern and Scoop switches, while Channel 2 has bright, USA/Brit and expander switches.

The YCS50H’s rear panel is similarly feature-packed. It includes a pair of



TRAYNOR YCS50H  
50-WATT HEAD AND  
YCS412VA 4X12 CABINET

### LIST PRICES:

YCS50H head, \$1,049.00; YCS412VA cabinet, \$819.00

### MANUFACTURER:

Traynor Amps, traynoramps.com

### OUTPUT:

50 watts (with switchable 15-watt Class A mode)

TUBES: Power amp, two EL34; preamp, three 12AX7

### CHANNELS:

Two FRONT PANEL: Channel 1:

gain, boost switch, boost level, volume, Modern switch, treble, mid, Scoop switch, bass, reverb, effects;

CHANNEL 2: Gain, bright switch, volume, USA/Brit switch, treble, mid, expander switch, bass, reverb, effects;

channel select switch, presence, resonance, voice switch, master volume, 1/4-inch input

REAR PANEL: 50/15-watt Amplifier mode switch, XLR DI Line Out, 1/4-inch EFX send and return jacks with EFX send level control, 1/4-inch preamp out and amp in jacks, 1/4-inch EFX/reverb and Channel 1/2 footswitch jacks, four-/eight-ohm impedance switch, two 1/4-inch parallel speaker output jacks

OTHER: Accutronics long-tray reverb, TFS-2 footswitch

parallel speaker outputs (with a four-/eight-ohm selector switch), footswitch jacks for channel 1/2 and effect loop/reverb switching, amp in and preamp out jacks for connecting guitar pedals, EFX send and return jacks, and an XLR DI line output. The effect loop also includes a variable send level control for matching signal levels. A rocker switch located near the DI Line Out lets you select either 50-watt Class AB or 15-watt Class A output.

The amp comes from the factory with a pair of EL34 and three 12AX7 tubes, but you can swap the EL34s for 6L6 or 5881 tubes. If you are electronically savvy, you can adjust the bias yourself without removing the chassis thanks to a recessed bias trim pot and easily accessible bias sensing points for each power tube. Other notable features include a long-tray dual-spring Accutronics reverb unit and an included TFS-2 footswitch unit with cable for switching channels and controlling Channel 1’s boost function.

**PERFORMANCE**

ALTHOUGH TRAYNOR has arranged its channels “backwards” compared to most amps, with Channel 1 being the highest gain channel and Channel 2 being the less aggressive clean/crunch channel, the layout and controls make it very easy to dial in the tones you want to hear. Channel 1 pumps out an impressive amount of gain, and with the Modern and Scoop switches engaged

it produces very aggressive bass and razor-sharp highs. On clean/overdrive settings the Modern and Scoop switches can also make a Les Paul sound like a Tele. Channel 2 is exceptionally versatile, delivering Fender-like shimmer and twang with the USA mode and Expander switch engaged and the reverb cranked up, or Plexi-style crunch and grind with the Brit mode engaged and the reverb left bone dry.

The YCS412VA cabinet is a great match for the head, keeping the bottom end nice and tight when subjected to Channel 1’s most over-the-top aggression, and delivering smooth breakup with excellent note definition when Channel 2 is dialed to a nice, bluesy overdrive setting. My only complaint is that the head’s transformer does not have a 16-ohm tap, which prevented me from trying out the amp with some of my favorite 4x12 cabinets. Plus the 4x12 cabinet weighs in at a ball-busting 100-plus pounds.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

TRAYNOR’S YCS50H AMP head and YCS412VA cabinet offer guitarists a wide variety of tones, from vintage classics to modern marvels, at a price that is perfect for today’s post Wall Street meltdown economy.

PRO	CON
LOW PRICE; WIDE VARIETY OF TONES; FOOTSWITCHABLE BOOST	NO 16-OHM SPEAKER OUTPUT; HEAVY SPEAKER CAB



The YCS412VA is loaded with robust Celestion GT12T-75 speakers.